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# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

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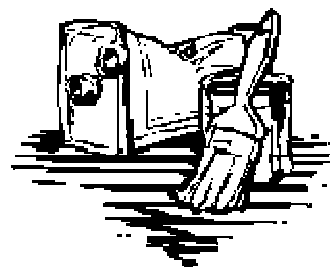
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## Recycling Household Paint

### Introduction

Paint products are complicated mixtures of chemicals designed to meet a variety of needs. For household use, there are two major categories of paint: oil-based paint and latex paint. The amount of paint which is purchased by residential consumers often exceeds the amount of paint actually needed or used for a specific project. Leftover paint is frequently stored for touch-up use at a later date. After being stored for several years, the result is often a collection of many different types and colors of unused paint in garages and basements.



In New Hampshire, nearly 930,000 gallons of excess household paint is either stored or disposed of annually. This amounts to approximately 2.25 gallons per household and represents nearly 70 percent (by volume) of the New Hampshire household hazardous waste stream.

The N.H. Department of Environmental Services (DES) encourages consumers to consciously reduce the quantity of unused paint generated. However, there are environmentally acceptable methods of paint management which include bringing the unwanted paint to a municipal paint "drop and swap", a municipal paint recycling center or a household hazardous waste (HHW) collection. While the best option is to buy only the amount of paint you need for a home project or reuse your leftover paint, recycling is now an available management practice.

### Acceptable Paint for Recycling

Both oil-based and latex paints are acceptable for recycling when they are sorted by a protocol established by a paint re-use contractor. This protocol is set to ensure the marketability of the paint. Persons contributing paint to a recycling center, must provide the paint in its **original container** to avoid contamination of the final recycled paint product.

Residents should identify the type of paint to be recycled by reading the front and back labels of the can. Key words on the front label which help to identify oil based paint are "oil-based", "alkyd", "polyurethane", "urethane" or "varnish". Key words on the back label which help to identify oil-based paint are "Caution: combustible" or "Warning: flammable". Certain oil-based paints are unable to be recycled due to their chemical or physical characteristics. Unacceptable oil-based paints for recycling include lead-containing paints, creosote-containing paint, paints containing pentachlorophenol ("Penta"), and swimming pool or marine paints.

Latex paints in original containers may also be identified by reading the labels. Key words on labels which help to identify latex paint are latex, acrylic, water-based, water-thinned, vinyl latex

or urethane latex, water, PVA, acrylic emulsion, vinyl emulsion, glycols or ethylene glycol. Latex paint that has been frozen or partially dried are unacceptable for recycling.

### **Paint Collections**

Communities are encouraged to institute paint re-use in the form of paint "swap and drop" programs and the collection of paint for recycling. Paint can also be recycled through reformulation into new paint products or blending oil-based paint into fuel.

Solid waste management facilities collecting paint may need to notify the Permitting and Design and Review Section at 271-2935 to ensure that the paint collection does not interfere with other operations at the facility. Paint collections should be located where there is adequate ventilation and handlers should wear protective clothing. The level of protection will depend on the amount and type of paint being collected. If only small volumes of latex paint are being examined and sorted, gloves may provide adequate protection. If oil-based paints are being consolidated, respirators may be required.

*Paint which is recycled through re-use:* New Hampshire regulations allow household latex and oil based paint that will be reused as paint to be managed as a marketable material rather than a waste. No permit is required to collect household paint for distribution and reuse, provided that the paint is stored appropriately and handled so that its value as a marketable product is maintained.



*Oil-based paint which is recycled through fuel blending:* Household oil-based paint which is collected for recycling by burning for energy recovery must be managed in accordance with the NH Hazardous Waste Rules, Env-Wm 100-1000. This includes using a hazardous waste manifest, a registered NH hazardous waste transporter, and shipping it to a facility which is authorized to accept this type of waste paint.

### **Closing the Loop**

Simply collecting paints for recycling does not constitute recycling. In addition to collecting paints, DES encourages municipalities to complete the recycling loop by **purchasing** recycled products, including paints. Paint re-use contractors generally provide discounts for recycled paint to those municipalities who participate in their paint collection, storage and re-use program.

**For Further Information** DES suggests that residents contact their community's transfer station or recycling center to inquire of its efforts in establishing a paint recycling program. For those communities who wish to institute a paint recycling program, please contact DES to obtain pertinent information.

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